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University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "UM program explores impact of economic crisis on Korean peninsula" (2009). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 21374.

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NEWS RELEASE

Feb. 18, 2009

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UM PROGRAM EXPLORES IMPACT OF ECONOMIC CRISIS ON KOREAN PENINSULA

MISSOULA -

Three top experts on North Korea will present a program at The University of Montana about the effects of the economy and the nuclear impasse on the Korean Peninsula.

The program, titled "Fallout Southeast Asia: Consequences of the Global Economic Crisis and Nuclear Stalemate on the Korean Peninsula," will take place from 3 to 5 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 24, in the University Center Theater. It is free and open to the public.

Terry Weidner, director of the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center at UM, said this program is particularly timely because rumors persist that North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il has suffered a serious stroke and U.S. policy toward the country is likely to change under the Obama administration. He said it wasn't a coincidence that Hillary Clinton's first overseas trip as secretary of state included a visit to South Korea.

"While the Obama administration has held out the promise of normalizing relations with North Korea, the North Koreans have thus far remained bellicose," Weidner said. "Is our hand open while their fist is still clenched, or could there be a fresh start between the U.S. and North Korea?"

Program participants will assess the latest developments in the six-party talks on North

Korea's nuclear program, as well as the enormous impact the global economic crisis is having on South Korea.

Presenters are Thomas Byrne, Gordon Flake and Nicole Finnemann.

Byrne is vice president/senior credit officer of Moody's Financial Institutions & Sovereign Risk Group. Since 1997 he has been a Moody's analyst for many Asian nations, including Japan, China, Korea and Thailand.

Flake is executive director of the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation. He previously served as director of research and academic affairs at the Korea Economic Institute and is a regular contributor on Korea issues in the American and Asian press.

Finnemann is director of research and academic affairs at the Korea Economic Institute and an expert on North Korea, which she visited in April 2008. She has extensive international experience as a negotiator and international conflict mediator.

The program at UM is funded by the Korea Economic Institute in Washington, D.C., and co-sponsored by the Mansfield Center, the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation and the World Affairs Council of Montana.

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